TL2369-2

United Nations
Press Release

Department of Public Information
Press Section
United Nations, New York

BIBLIOTECA
05.MAR.1984
ONU-LISBOA

HR/2537
24 February 1984

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION CONTINUES DEBATE ON RIGHT OF PEOPLES TO SELF-DETERMINATION

GENEVA, 23 February (UN INformation Service) -- The Commission on Human Rights this morning continued examination of its item relating to the right of peoples to self-determination and its application to peoples under colonial or alien domination or foreign occupation.

The Commission heard the representative of Colombia and the observers from Afghanistan, Viet Nam, Democratic Kampuchea, Byelorussia, Poland, Turkey, Indonesia and Uganda.

The observer of the Four Directions Council also made a statement.

The representatives of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Morocco spoke in right of reply.

Statements in Debate

NGUGEN THUONG (Viet Nam), speaking as an observer, reaffirming his support for the principle of the right of peoples to self-determination, noted that violations of its application were still occurring in several parts of the world. Israel, denying the Palestinian people their rights, was enforcing the establishment of Israeli settlements in the occupied Arab territories. In South Africa, the Pretoria régime was trying to block the independence of Namibia. As for the question of Puerto Rico and Micronesia, he denounced the so-called free association manoeuvres which were nothing else but an attempt at annexation.

International imperialist Powers had been trying to regain positions which they thought they had lost, now that colonialism was no longer possible. In doing so, they had provoked political, economic and sometimes military destabilization in areas of vital interest for them. An outstanding example was the invasion and occupation of Grenada. United States imperialism was carrying out an aggressive policy in several parts of the world, particularly in Latin America, the Middle East and in South Africa. Regarding the situation in South-East Asia, he said the victorious struggle of the Vietnamese people for its liberation and national reunification had been a struggle for the full realization of the right to self-determination.

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Turning to Afghanistan, he said the Afgnan people grasped a chance to shape their future according to their own will. In conformity with the 1978 Afghan-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, the Government of Afghanistan had turned to the Soviet Union to provide assistance in order to repel aggression directed from abroad.

Nicaragua, also subject to acts of aggression from abroad, was striving to pursue its policies according to the genuine interests of its people. He called upon the United Nations to continue its strong condemnation of the violation of the right to self-determination and to support and assist those who were still under colonial, foreign and alien subjugation.

In conclusion, he rejected all accusations against his country made last Friday, 17 February, by the representative of the United States. Poland was a sovereign country.

BILGE CANKOREL (Turkey), speaking as an observer, stated that the denial of self-determination to peoples constituted not only a violation of a fundamental right, but also seriously endangered regional and world peace. Nothing could better illustrate the traumatic consequences of the denial of the right to self-determination than the plight suffered by the peoples of Palestine, Namibia, Afghanistan and Kampuchea.

Turkey was particularly concerned by the situation in Afgnanistan and by the number of refugees crossing the frontier to go to live in neighbouring countries, he said. He wished a negotiated settlement could be reached in order to enable the Afghan people to exercise their right to self-determination, and to ensure the withdrawal of foreign troops and the return home of the Afghan refugees.

He reaffirmed his country's solidarity with the people of Namibia for independence under the leadership of South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO). He called for the withdrawal of foreign forces from Kampuchea and the recognition of the right to self-determination of its people. In conclusion, he observed that Turkey was among the sponsors of the two draft resolutions on Afghanistan and Kampuchea before the Commission.

I.A.AN DARSA (Indonesia), speaking as an observer, rejected the accusations against his country and said that Indonesia had never had the ambition of annexing East Timor.

Indonesia was a multi-ethnic nation, mostly of Malayan, Polynesian and Melanesian stock, but also comprising millions of citizens of Chinese, Arab, Indian and European ancestry. Its nationhood was not based on racial considerations, and Indonesia was proud of its long record of opposing all forms of racial discrimination.

He said that since 1976 the Indonesian Government had channelled substantial funds to East Timor in order to accelerate development in the

province and to allow the people there to catch up with the other Indonesians politically, economically, culturally and spiritually. Concluding, he said East Timor had integrated into Indonesia.

BERNARD ODOCH-JATO (Uganda), speaking as an observer, said the Commission was once again called upon to pronounce itself on the plight of millions of people around the world who remained victims of colonial subjugation and foreign or alien domination.

He rejected the issue of "linkage" brought forth by the Pretoria régime concerning Namibia. The accession of Namibia to independence was pegged to a collective defence arrangement lawfully and justifiably concluded between the sovereign States of Angola and Cuba. South Africa persisted in its demand for the abrogation of that arrangement as a price for the independence of Namibia. Uganda, therefore, rejected the linkage between the independence of Namibia and the withdrawal of Cuban military forces from Angola.

The right of a people to freedom, self-determination and independence was inalienable and could not be the subject of any form of extortion, he said. Moreover, apartheid was a fascist system and as such was totally incompatible with any notion of democracy. Its structure was designed to complement the bantustan policy and to buttress the system of apartheid with a view to the perpetual denial of the right to self-determination to the black majority.

In the Middle East region, he said the Palestinian people were experiencing a tragedy of comparable dimensions. On the basis of illegal occupation and annexation, Israel continued to deny to the Palestinian people their inalienable right to a homeland and to self-determination. Through systematic dismantling of Palestinian administrative institutions and arbitrary dismissal of mayors in the occupied West Bank and Gaza, Israel sought to destroy the ultimate semblance of Palestinian self-determination.

Elsewhere in Africa, the people of Western Sahara were yearning for the right to determine their own national destiny. He supported the Saharan people in their legitimate quest and appealed to the parties to that conflict, namely Morocco and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Rio de Oro (POLISARIO), to enter into negotiations at the earliest opportunity with a view to achieving a cease-fire and to the prompt implementation of a general and fair referendum in accordance with the resolution adopted by the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

He hoped the Commission would continue to work fervently towards vindication of the struggle of all those countries and peoples in order to ensure that the right to self-determination become truly universal.

GILBERT PILOT, speaking as an observer from the Four Directions Council, supported all peoples in Africa, Central and South America fighting for their right to self-determination.

He drew the attention of the Commission to other violations occurring at present in North America. A colonialist régime, he said, had been forced by

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